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AUTHOR Lindeman, David P.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

An alternative management model was implemented to increase teacher productivity in an institutional school for 185 mildly to severely mentally retarded children. The model included three components: a management structure that allowed for problem solving while still motivating staff; an inservice program for staff; and an evaluation system to provide staff with feedback on the effectiveness of their instruction. A shift in management placed greater responsibility on teachers and led to the development of self managed units consisting of four to five teachers. The inservice program addressed instructional planning activities, direct instructional behaviors, and evaluation procedures. A minicomputer was used to provide evaluatory feedback allowing staff to assess their level of productivity. (CL)

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Organizing a Special Education Program Utilizing the Theory Z Model of Management

David P. Lindeman, Dennis Hasson, JoAnn Garrett,
Marty Page and Robert Rhodes

Special Purpose School
Parsons State Hospital and Training Center
Parsons, Kansas

The delivery of quality educational programming to handicapped students should be the central goal of every administrator and teacher involved in special education. Nevertheless, recent research suggests that in classrooms for severely handicapped a low incidence of systematic instruction is often the rule rather than the exception (Liberty & Wilcox, 1981). This suggests that while administrators have been effective in meeting legal compliance with rules and regulations they have been less effective in producing quality programs.

Factors such as teacher burnout, low motivation, lack of adequate staff training, and non-data based evaluation have been factors attributed to reduced productivity of teaching staff (Dixon, Shaw, & Bensky, 1980; Knapczyk & Dever, 1979; McCormick, Cooper, & Goldman, 1979). Therefore, it is the responsibility of educational administrators to address these issues and develop management systems which seek to promote teacher productivity. The purpose of this paper is to outline an attempt by one special education program to develop a comprehensive management system which encourages quality educational services for handicapped children and youth.

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The Special Purpose School located at Parsons, Kansas serves approximately 185 school-age students who are residents of Parsons State Hospital and Training Center. The school maintains 20 classrooms which are located both on and off the hospital grounds. The levels of disability of these students range from mildly to severely mentally handicapped.

An analysis of child performance data indicated to the staff that the Special Purpose School faced many of the same problems other school systems have faced, namely a decrease in teacher productivity. This appraisal lead to the decision to adapt an alternative management model which would address the following concerns: a) reduce the isolation experienced by most teachers in self-contained rooms; b) provide a greater opportunity for teachers to work with students of various levels of handicaps; c) encourage innovation and initiative; and finally, d) increase the personal investment of each teacher in the quality of education they provide.

As a result the staff set out to revamp the management and delivery of the educational program. This model provided for three distinct components which were the: a) development of a management structure which allowed for flexible and effective problem solving while at the same time motivating staff; b) development of an inservice program to maintain an ongoing skill development program to increase the knowledge base of direct instructional staff; and, c) implementation of an evaluation plan and system to provide instructional staff regular feedback on the effectiveness and efficiency of their instruction.

Component I - Self-Managed Units

Following the basic guidelines set forth in the Theory Z (Ouchi, 1981) model of management the Special Purpose School sought to reduce the hierarchical nature of the management structure and move to a more horizontal structure. This shift in management recognized that the direct instructional staff were the critical element in developing and providing quality education. This in effect gave the teaching staff the responsibility to make decisions regarding the education of the student resulting in an active personal investment by the teacher.

This structural change led to the development of self-managed units consisting of four to five teachers. These units were formed through a self-selection process of colleagues who wished to work together. Following this formation, each unit developed a 20 to 30 page proposal which outlined that unit's individual goals and objectives. These proposals were then evaluated by a panel of special education professionals associated with the Hospital and Bureau of Child Research. The proposals were rated on clarity of purpose, relevance to the needs of the students to be served, and the application of current up-to-date instructional technology. The proposals which received the highest rating were a language based incidental teaching model, a community integration model, and a vocational training model.

The self-managed unit concept differs from team teaching in that each unit was given a greater degree of freedom in the decision making process. These freedoms involved the selection and scheduling of students, development of curricula, allocation of instructional resources and the determination of inservice needs. While the self-managed units were given

greater freedom, there were certain nonnegotiable issues. These were:

- a) that systematic instruction and student progress data be maintained;
- b) that all students work with at least two or more teachers; and,
- c) that each member of the unit be responsible for the educational production of the entire unit. In short, each unit became a quality control circle for each of its members.

Component II - Ongoing Inservice

The second component of the reorganization process was the development of an ongoing inservice program. Its purpose was to make innovative instruction an integral part of the teacher's job. The first phase of the inservice program was developed to provide a common base from which the teaching staff could improve and expand their direct instructional skills.

This training focused on the use of a combination of applied behavior analysis and educational technology. The instructional competencies targeted were organized into three categories. These were: instructional planning activities, direct instructional behaviors, and evaluation procedures. Mastery of each of these competencies had to be demonstrated at both the didactic and applied levels. Demonstration at the didactic level was assessed by inclass discussion and tests with direct observation of instructional skills at the applied level by the inservice instructor.

Future inservice will be determined by each self-managed unit. It is anticipated that this training will focus more specifically on the unique needs of each unit.

Component III - Evaluation

The final component of the reorganization process was the development of an ongoing evaluation system. The purpose of this system was to examine the effectiveness of the management system and was in no way tied to personnel evaluation.

There is little data available to suggest that alterations of management models and staff development projects alone are adequate for modifying staff behavior. These events merely set the occasion for increasing productivity.

Critical to increasing the effectiveness of an organization is the specification of expected outcomes. When manufacturing a permanent produce (such as cars) determining measures of productivity is a relatively easy task. When examining educational outcomes with handicapped children the measures became somewhat complex. Although mastery of objectives is important it should not be the only factor in determining productivity, since this metric cannot be consistent across children or within curricula areas.

Therefore, it was concluded that multiple measures of productivity would be needed to assess the effectiveness of the management system and that some measures would have to examine the process of education rather than the product. The measures of productivity which were selected were: a) the amount of time students spend in direct instructional activities; b) the number of instructional programs run per student; c) the number of instructional strategy changes made in relation to the lack of student progress, and finally; d) the number of objectives mastered per student.

Having determined that these multiple measures would be used to evaluate the productivity of the self-managed units, some basic principles found in the study of organizational behavior management were employed. These principles encompassed the concept of feedforward and feedback behavior control. In other words, use of antecedent and consequence control to affect teaching behavior.

Our feedforward control focused on organizing the method in which teachers documented their instructional process. On a form for each instructional program a series of teacher behaviors are coded (antecedent, response, consequence, consequence schedule, correction procedure) according to the instructional strategy employed. In essence, this feedforward control made teachers use a consistent format when documenting instructional programs. This systematic action also meant that teachers developed programs in a manner which dictated that they focus on the same output measures. In other words these feedforward procedures allowed for agreement on expected outcomes by all members of the educational system.

The final component of the evaluation process required the development of a procedure that provided consistent, reliable and periodic feedback to direct instructional staff. This feedback would then be used by staff to objectively evaluate their program effectiveness and to make adjustments when necessary.

Because of the large amount of information which is continually generated, a microcomputer is used to analyze and summarize the data. Use of the microcomputer allows for the: a) maintenance of a master list of programs which are in training with each student; b) maintenance of individual student performance data; c) summarization of data for each

individual student on the amount of time, average performance, and number of sessions completed for any given time interval; and finally, d) analysis of student performance data over time to determine celeration trends of each instructional program.

These data are entered into the computer every five days. Feedback is then given by supervisory staff at a regular weekly meeting, which allows the self-managed unit to assess their level of productivity.

While the management model has only been set in place, the preliminary results suggest that teachers morale is higher as a result of the management change; objectives and instructional strategies of those who have completed the inservice component represent a higher degree of application of current instructional technology; and finally, that the evaluation system outlined is feasible. It remains to be seen, however, whether over the next several years, the changes which have been implemented can substantially improve the input our total program has on the lives of those we serve.

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